

New mural in Gernika/Guernica

Report by Simon Martinez



A new mural has been unveiled in the Basque town of Gernika/Guernica. This beautiful work of art depicts some of the 4000 children who left Santurtzi/Santurce on the 21 May 1937 on the SS *Habana* to escape the war in Euskadi. They were hungry, frightened, and missing their mums and dads. On the left of the picture the artist captures their expressions perfectly. They look out from the picture towards us 83 years later. These faces capture the anxiety felt by the children carrying their belongings in a cloth bag or a small suitcase as they left Euskadi. Some of them were never to return.



To the right of the mural is the image of a child in a thermal/space blanket within the protective embrace of a man in a dark jacket. The bottom half of the child's face can be seen with the workman's hands nurturing the child. The gold coloured foil blanket shows the child has been pulled from an unsafe sea perhaps from an inflatable boat used to carry refugees from North Africa to Spain. The three dimensional quality of this part of the mural contrasts with the monochrome, photo-like representation of the Basque Children. This is happening now and only the man in the dark jacket is doing anything about it.

'Ongi Etorri Errefuxiatuak' is the euskara (Basque) for Refugees Welcome Here.

In 1937 the Basque Children were welcomed by the British people and in Gernika/Guernica the refugees of 2020 are being given refuge. The child of 2020 wears a red and white scarf the colours of Athletic Bilbao.

I don't know when I will be going to visit Gernika/Guernica but will definitely go to see this new work.